### Introduction:

Last week we used two biblical images to talk about an ideal city. The first was taken from the New Testament Book of Revelation and it talked about John the Revelator being in prison with all of his freedom taken away except the freedom to think and dream and pray. And in that context John said, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." (Revelations 21:2) And later, in verse 16, John told us the shape and dimensions of the new city he saw - "its length and breadth and height are equal."

So out of John's triangular vision came a picture of an ideal city - a city whose length and breadth and height were equal. It was an equilateral triangle - a perfect triangle. John envisioned a city that was

whole and complete

and

just

. It wasn't up on one side and down on the other.

We also used another biblical image of a shining city on a hill. In the New Testament book of Matthew, Chapter 5, Jesus talked about his view of an idealized city. In verses 14-16, he said: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

And for Black History Month we paid tribute to the legacy of Chicago's first African American Mayor, Harold Washington - and raised the question: "WHAT DOES A SHINING CITY ON A HILL LOOK LIKE?" Today is Part II. So - back by popular demand - we'll focus on Harold Washington's vision of Chicago as a "Shining City on a Hill."

## I. CHICAGO'S LEGACY

Chicago has a rich legacy. Chicago poet Gwendolyn Brooks and others have captured our essence and helped to make our city famous. Chicago is famous for "THE GOSPEL AND THE BLUES." Both have had an impact on *all* of America's music. It's originators - Mahalia Jackson, Jessy Dixon, Rev. Clay Evans, Albertina Walker, Sam Cooke, Willie Rogers, the Soul Stirrers, the Staple Singers, Dinah Washington, Otis Clay, Jerry Butler, Curtis Mayfield, The Dells, The Chi-Lites, Tyrone Davis, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, Bo Diddley, Buddy Guy, Koco Taylor (a constituent of mine) and countless others in Chicago - molded the music we now know as pop and rock 'n roll - not to mention rhythm and blues, rap and hip-hop.

Chicago is a labor city, but today labor isn't fairing well. The city has refused to negotiate in good faith for a contract with city workers - firemen, policemen and others; and it has treated many other organized workers in our city with disdain and contempt.

While downtown is shining and booming with multi-million dollar expenditures on playgrounds, our neighborhoods, schools, health care system and housing needs continue to be short-changed.

## II. HAROLD WASHINGTON'S ASCENDANCY

Things were similar when Harold Washington emerged in 1983. He overcame huge political obstacles to become Mayor. Harold Washington was an independent Democrat who grew up with a legacy of significant independent movements in Chicago - open housing marches led by Dr. Martin Luther Kings, Jr. in 1966; the weekly meetings of Operation Breadbasket and later Operation PUSH; Triple-CO, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations and Al Raby; KOCO (the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization) and Bob Lucas; and the Westside's Midwest Community Council of Nancy Jefferson. The aldermanic victories of Judge William Cousins and Harold Washington's own victory as congressman. Dorothy Tillman, Marian Stamps and two others were arrested protesting at a CHA Board meeting - which led to the successful boycott of Chicagofest and helped to trigger a massive voter registration drive.

Against this backdrop the climate was ripe for change. There were many appeals for Harold to run. He was reluctant. He said if the movement is really serious, this is what it will take: 50,000 new voters on the books; \$250,000 in the bank; only one African American candidate in the race; and for the community to give him the freedom to run on a platform that was broad enough to appeal to a coalition of Chicago voters beyond his base. Lu Palmer responded with a grassroots campaign, "We shall see in '83," and a voter registration campaign, "Come alive

October 5" - the rest is history.

Voter registration is still important. Democrats, both nationally and locally, say, "African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans basically live in `safe' Democratic districts, and vote strongly and consistently for the party - so they mostly take minorities for granted. And because African Americans, especially, vote heavily Democratic, Republicans have no interest in registering us. Also, Democrats don't concentrate on registering and have us vote to our *maxi mum* 

strength because we might run against their regular candidates and demand our fair share of the economic pie. We might demand that the remaining social, economic and political gaps be closed.

But we shouldn't accept the Democratic or the Republican appraisal of us. WE have an interest in registering everyone who is eligible!

The resources must come bottom up. We should begin the planning today, and launch the most comprehensive and massive voter registration drive in the history of Chicago.

## III. THE HAROLD WASHINGTON LEGACY

After Harold Washington was elected, the question became, "How will he govern?" Did Mayor Harold Washington have a vision for Chicago whose length and breadth and height were equal? Did he have a vision of Chicago as a shining city on a hill? I believe he did! We might even say he had his own Ten Commandments for governing. Let's take a closer look at the principles by which he governed.

1. Mayor Washington believed in *good government*. Good government meant representing and serving all Chicagoans. He made sure all of

Chicago's citizens and communities received city services based on their citizenship

, not on their loyalty to a political party or machine. He understood and supported the Shakman consent decree of the 1970s and '80s - which covered most of the city's 38,000 jobs. Prior to that decree most city workers had to do political work in order to keep their patronage job. Shakman made it illegal for city employees to be *forced* 

to engage in political work in order for the city to hire them. We must not go backwards!

2. Mayor Washington believed in *open government*. He believed in representative democracy, not dictatorial government. He believed that the peoples' business should be transparent - not conducted in secret. He believed that the people had a right to know what their government was doing *to* them, *for* them and *with* them. He believed that unjustified secrecy and democratic government were incompatible. He *had a "one big tent" vision* 

where - for the first time - we could all fit under it, and none were afraid because everyone had a shared interest in the tent - and no one was left outside. Prior to Harold Washington, Chicago was promoting and living in a narrow culture. Mayor Washington opened Chicago up. He appreciated new input and ideas, which broadened and expanded Chicago's culture. He helped to teach us how to live in the multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic community of the 21st century.

- 3. Mayor Washington believed in *fair government*. On Harold Washington's tombstone is written, "He Loved Chicago" and he tried to be fair. Traditional Chicago politics operated the reverse of fairness and inclusion. It operated like the Sunnis in Iraq and whites in South Africa during apartheid that is, the minority population ruled over the majority. In Chicago the best economic opportunities were set-aside and reserved for the *minority*
- the plum jobs, the key promotions, the most profitable vendors and the most lucrative contracts were

economic set-asides reserved for the minority in power.

By contrast, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans and women (the *majority* 

in Chicago) were the ones who were set aside. The *minority ruled* 

and the

majority was left behind and left out

. The majority of Chicagoans

are

fair, but they weren't in power. The Chicago Democratic Machine had turned fairness on its head. Harold Washington made fairness and the rule of law the order of the day.

4. Mayor Washington believed in *responsive and participatory government*. He knew that government had a role, and that Chicago's government had not always served all of its people well. So he began delivering new and better services - even to machine wards that had never before received them. He knew that many Chicagoans had lost confidence and faith in their government. He also knew that the people had a responsibility; that they could not just sit by passively and expect the government to do its job without any effort on their part. As Mayor, he had a responsibility to improve the schools; but parents had a responsibility to improve

attendance, to turn the television off, to visit with their child's teacher, to review report cards; and students' had a responsibility to improve their study habits. Mayor Washington helped to restore faith and confidence in government and revived citizen participation and involvement.

5. Mayor Washington believed in *equal access to jobs, promotions and contracts for all.* To do that he had to choose respect for, and equal enforcement of, the law over the corrupt political culture he inherited. He chose "what

ought

to happen" over "what

had been

happening." There were "Hired Truck" scandals, "O'Hare Stench" exposés, "Millennium Park mistakes" and back room deals in his day too. It was one of the reasons he won - to clean up the mess. His remedy for unfairness and corruption was equal opportunity and equal access under the law. When confronted with a problem he didn't say "my way or the highway," a corrupt program or no program. He said there's a third way - equal protection and equal access under the law

for all

. Mayor Washington believed in democratic government that wasn't a rubber stamp. He believed in the separation of powers. He believed in democratic government with "checks and balances." He wanted a City Council that held credible hearings to get to the bottom of things, a City Council that launched investigations to root out waste, fraud and abuse in city government. That's why I continue to call for serious, credible and independent City Council hearings on what has gone wrong with Chicago's affirmative action and economic set aside programs. Nothing short of equal opportunity for all and respect for the law is at stake!

6. Mayor Washington recognized, honored and celebrated Chicago's multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious culture and make-up . He saw that there were social, economic, political and spiritual advantages in including everyone. He was a strong believer in the legal concept of desegregation and the spiritual concept of integration

- . He knew life was better when all felt whole and could participate.
- 7. Mayor Washington *emphasized neighborhood development*. He knew people mostly live in neighborhoods. We shop in local neighborhoods and like to sit on our porches in safe neighborhoods. That's why he fixed sidewalks, repaired streets, improved local schools and

community policing, added local community health centers, picked up garbage, and helped develop small businesses *all over Chicago* 

- because he knew neighborhoods are where we live. He recognized our biggest challenge was to learn to live together; to choose co-existence over co-annihilation; cooperation over polarization; and participation over domination.
- 8. He also believed in giving people *first opportunities and second chances*. He had experienced and needed the same for himself. Redemption and revival are keys to renewal. So many have fallen by the wayside. In Chicago, there are 300,000 drug addicts who need treatment, who need to transition from sickness to health, who need to transition from unemployment to employment, and chance, with our help, to become whole again.
- 9. Mayor Washington believed in *balanced economic growth*. He did *not* believe or practice an *ethic*

that "my side of town gets all the contracts," "only my team gets the jobs and promotions." O'Hare drives economic growth north and northwest. Midway's economic engine stimulates growth west. Governor Rod Blagojevich is to be commended for choosing to recommend to the FAA the 3rd airport plan I've been working on with the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission in order to stimulate growth in south Chicago and the south suburbs. I've been fighting for such balanced growth for 10 years.

10. Finally, Mayor Washington believed in *inclusion for all and hostility toward none*. Many Chicagoans had experienced a closed system for so long and gotten so used to *unfairness* 

that they thought fairness was unreasonable. Mayor Washington sought to be fair and did his best to be just. He wasn't interested in a justice that punished, but a creative justice that increased equality.

# **CONCLUSION:**

This shining city on a hill still exists. Now, however, there are clouds between the light and us. I fly often between Chicago and Washington, and on a dreary or cloudy day I'm always amazed after takeoff that we're just a cumulus cloud away from a bright sunny day. Only the clouds dim the light and the brilliance.

This shining city on a hill is a possible dream. It's not impossible. Indeed, the dream is imperative! If we're to revive hope, reduce school dropouts, inspire our youth and employ their parents, we <i>must</i> continue to dream - as well as prepare to struggle again <i>collectively</i> . It's won't be easy, but we're winners. We must overcome and master the odds.
Perhaps James Weldon Johnson said it best when he wrote:
Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.

We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the light,

Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.